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WAS THE COUNT OF POPULATION IN 1890 REASONABLY
CORRECT ?

BY HENRY GANNETT.

The Census Office has recently prepared tables showing the distribution of the population by periods of age, classifying them also by race and nativity of parents. The appearance of these tables enables anyone to make a tolerably searching test into the completeness of the enumeration. It will be remembered that this census was the subject of violent attacks, the grounds of the attacks being the reduction in the rate of increase of the population in the face of an unprecedented immigration. Most estimates of the population in 1890 placed our number from one to several millions more than the enumeration showed, and the disappointment of the people was very great.

Comparisons were instituted between the results of this census and those of school censuses, of elections, of directory counts, and, above all, of *ex-parte* enumerations made by the people interested, all to the disadvantage of the census.

In the case of a defective enumeration the omissions are more likely to consist of colored persons than of whites, of the lower classes than of the higher classes, and of the young children rather than of adults.

A census is taken each ten years. Leaving out of consideration all persons of foreign birth, those of native birth enumerated in 1880 who were living in 1890 were at that time over ten years of age. Therefore, the number enumerated in 1890 as being over ten years of age, plus the number who had died in the ten-year interval, a number which can be estimated closely from the known death rate, should, if the census of 1890 was complete, be found to correspond closely with the total native-born population in 1880.

First, as to the rate of mortality. Upon page 25, volume I, Report of the Tenth Census on Mortality, Dr. Billings prints a table showing the number of living population at various ages, and the number of deaths at those ages. The number of deaths is admittedly incomplete to an extent, he states, of 15 to 30 per cent. The death rate at all ages collectively as derived from these is 15 per thousand living per year. From other considerations Dr. Billings concludes that this

rate should be increased to 18 per thousand per year, increasing that given by the face of the returns by 20 per cent. The death rate for persons over one year of age is, from the returns, 12.2 per thousand. Increasing this in the same proportion it becomes 15. Similarly for those over two years of age the death rate is 13.3, etc. In this way the death rate was obtained for the total population above each successive year of age up to ten years. Applying these death rates successively to the native population in 1880, 43,475,840, and subtracting the deaths thus obtained from the population, there is obtained, finally, as the native population surviving in 1890, over ten years of age, 37,879,000. This is the number over ten years of age which, assuming the Tenth Census to have been taken correctly, and the death rates assumed to be accurate, should have been returned by the Eleventh Census. To what extent do the returns of that census differ from these figures? The census of 1890 found of native born above the age of ten years 37,498,992. The difference between them is 380,000, or about one per cent. In other words, the native population ten years and over in 1890 is found to be short, according to the Eleventh Census, about one per cent, as compared with the count of the same persons in 1880, reduced by the estimated number of deaths.

Before deciding that the census of 1890 was in error, however, to the extent of one per cent, let us see what other possibilities there are in the case which may account for this discrepancy. If the death rate had been assumed a single unit larger, that is, 19 instead of 18, etc., it would have accounted for this discrepancy in full. Of course, it may be added that if a smaller death rate had been assumed the discrepancy would have been larger, to which the reply is that the death rate assumed was smaller than in any other country on the globe, and much smaller than that indicated by the registration cities.

No account has been taken of the persons of native birth who during the ten years have left this country. Their number is certainly not inconsiderable, and may, to a considerable extent at least, offset this discrepancy.

A table classifying the population by age, with sex, race, and nativity, recently finished by the Census Office, furnishes the means of criticising the returns of children of native birth who are under 10 years of age.

This table shows that the native white children under 10 years of

age constituted, in 1890, 27.8 per cent of all native whites. The corresponding proportion in 1880 was 30.1 per cent, showing a diminution of 2.3 per cent. In 1890 the colored children under 10 formed 28.1 per cent of all colored, and in 1880 31.8 per cent, showing a reduction of 3.7 per cent. Both these reductions, and especially that in the case of the colored, are larger than was to have been expected.

To examine these figures in greater detail let us set down in tabular form the proportions which children of the two races and at various ages bore to the totals of those elements at each census.

NATIVE WHITE.

	1880.	1890.
Under 1 year.....	3.3	2.9
1 to 5 years.....	15.6	14.2
5 to 10 years.....	14.5	13.6
10 to 15 years.....	12.6	12.2

The above shows that in 10 years the proportion of children under one year of age diminished by 0.4 per cent, or about one-eighth of their proportion. The children under 5 years diminished by 1.4 per cent, or by nearly one in 10, and those between 5 and 10 diminished 0.9 per cent.

COLORED.

	1880.	1890.
Under 1 year.....	3.4	2.7
1 to 5 years.....	16.5	13.8
5 to 10 years.....	15.3	14.3
10 to 15 years.....	12.4	13.7

The colored children less than one year of age diminished 0.7 per cent, or more than a fifth of their proportion, in 1880. Those under 5 years of age diminished 2.7 per cent, and those between 5 and 10 diminished 1.0 per cent. These reductions in the proportions from 1880 to 1890 are too large to be at all probable. There is, however, more convincing evidence still of a shortage among these ages than this. The native whites under 5 years of age in 1890 exceeded those between 5 and 10 by a small amount, not by any means sufficiently

large to allow for the large death rate of the first 5-year period of life. Among the colored the number given as under 5 years of age in 1890 is less numerically than that between 5 and 10 years of age, a condition of things which is extremely improbable. While the number of native whites under 5 years of age in 1890 exceeds the corresponding number in 1880 by 13 per cent, the number of colored under 5 years of age in 1890 is absolutely less than the number in the same age period in 1880.

This evidence appears to indicate a shortage among the negro children amounting perhaps to a quarter of a million. The shortage among the native white children is by no means as great proportionally, but may amount numerically to about the same.

There remains to be examined the element of foreign birth. In 1880 this country contained 6,679,943 persons of foreign birth. During the decade 5,246,613 immigrants arrived, which would have made altogether 11,926,556, providing none had died or left the country. The census found 9,249,547 foreign born in the country in 1890, leaving 2,677,009 to be accounted for. The great reaper accounts for about two-thirds of this number, leaving nearly a million unaccounted for. Probably most of these have returned, as the statistics of departures compared with those of arrivals indicate that between one-fourth and one-fifth of the immigrants return.